

PREVENTING SUICIDE AND SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- More than 30,000 lives are lost to suicide each year in the United States.
- Almost 325,000 Americans are treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments (EDs) each year, after attempting to take their own lives.
- Adults ages 70 years and older have the highest suicide rate of any age group, averaging one suicide every two hours.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC is supporting groundbreaking research that has preliminary results documenting the efficacy of a community-based cognitive therapy program for preventing suicidal behavior among suicide attempters identified in EDs. While mental health issues are addressed in this program, the main intervention is to help patients develop more adaptive ways of thinking about their situation and more functional ways of responding to periods of emotional distress. Preliminary results show an impact on suicide reattempts in this high-risk population.

CDC is working with the Consumer Product Safety Commission to collect and examine data from hospital EDs. The National Electronic Injury Surveillance System-All Injury Program tracks data on all types and external causes of nonfatal injuries and poisonings treated in U.S. hospital EDs. Using these data, CDC researchers are able to generate national estimates of nonfatal injuries, including those related to suicidal behavior.

CDC established the Suicide Prevention Research Center at the University of Nevada. This center serves the Rocky Mountain region (CO, AZ, NV, UT, NM, ID, MT, and WY), which has the highest suicide rates in the country. The central feature of the center is its ability to link all sources of suicide information within the region. It provides a complete listing of all evaluated suicide prevention programs in existence for 5 years or longer, the common characteristics, and the specific population groups they serve. Information obtained is used to develop and implement suicide prevention interventions specific to the region.

Example of Program in Action

CDC is conducting an in-depth, multi-state examination of the development and implementation of state suicide prevention plans. The results will help other states develop suicide prevention plans and gain the support of stakeholders so that these plans can be put into practice. Insights gleaned from this study will help inform state-based prevention efforts in other public health problem areas such as violence against women and child maltreatment.

CDC is also funding two states (ME and VA) to develop suicide prevention programs specific to their needs. This funding provides the necessary resources to advance from data gathering and analysis to identifying best practices for suicide prevention.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will continue to collaborate with private and public health agencies to develop comprehensive suicide prevention activities. CDC will conduct further research and surveillance activities to identify protective and risk factors in specific populations and to provide information for targeted evaluation studies.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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